



### Rep. Cary Condotta

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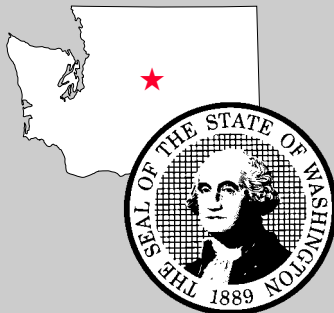
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# Rep. Cary Condotta

*12th Legislative District*

## 2004 Session Priorities

January 2004

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

The 2004 Legislative session started Jan. 12. While the general focus of lawmakers arriving back in Olympia is coming up with ideas for new laws, I believe we must also fix or eliminate existing laws and regulations that aren't working or are burdening employers and working families.

To that end, one of my top priorities this session will be to continue **easing our state's regulatory burden on employers**. Last year we moved in that direction by making major improvements to our state's costly unemployment insurance system. We also made a small but significant fix to workers' compensation. But we still have a long way to go. It is more important than ever to create an environment where new investment can flourish. While the emphasis is to create new job opportunities, I am just as concerned about keeping the jobs we already have by supporting employers who already call Washington home. That's why this session I will push for more reforms that will make our regulatory environment less costly and cumbersome, and make Washington more competitive and attractive for job providers. Health care also remains a major issue — and help is on the way in the form of new health savings accounts. Combined with catastrophic insurance, these accounts provide a consumer driven alternative to our current system. We must ensure that Washington is on board with this major breakthrough.

I will continue to focus this year on **issues important to the 12<sup>th</sup> District**, including regaining our water and property rights, improving schools, and helping farmers and small businesses. One of my highest priorities is to support Alcoa's efforts to restart the Wenatchee plant, saving hundreds of manufacturing jobs and providing a substantial boost to our local economy.

Please don't hesitate to contact me during the session to let me know your thoughts on issues before the Legislature. I also welcome your ideas regarding specific problems and issues you would like to see addressed. And, if you are having difficulty with a state agency and would like assistance, please let me know. I am looking forward to a very productive session and will provide you with a **report on our progress** at a later date. We will be back in our district office after session — hopefully in March — and I look forward to seeing you then.

Sincerely,

A red ink handwritten signature of Cary Condotta.

Cary Condotta  
State Representative

# Representative Cary Condotta

## 12th District

MADE  
PROGRESS

NO  
PROGRESS



## Improving our Business Climate

For the last 10 years, **regulations have ranked as the biggest problem area** for Washington's small businesses. A single business owner with no employees must comply with 35 sets of regulations from 18 different local, state and federal agencies. If that business creates one additional job, they must comply with 58 sets of regulations enforced by 28 different agencies – altogether making more than 100,000 regulatory requirements.

That's simply too much to ask from any one individual working to provide for his or her family. As Assistant Ranking Republican on the House Commerce & Labor Committee, I'm determined to **make it easier to do business in Washington**. Below are some ideas House Republicans are promoting to achieve that goal. Although Democrats stopped many of these proposals last year, some made it into law. I'll keep working this year to enact these ideas that will help employers and families.

### 1. Unemployment insurance

Competition for Boeing's 7E7 project last year gave us leverage to push through **sweeping changes to the state's unemployment insurance** – changes that help retain and create jobs in *all* sectors in our state.

### 2. Workers' Compensation

Last year the Legislature enacted a statute of limitations for hearing loss claims, saving \$200 million this biennium. This year we are again **putting the workers' comp system under the microscope** to see how we can reduce rates, stop fraud and examine private insurance options for employers.

### 3. Health care insurance

Government is telling health care insurers what they must include in their plans, sending insurance rates out of control. This year House Republicans will again propose a plan to **reduce costly, government-imposed mandates**. We must also ensure that Washington residents have access to health savings accounts. I have spent a great deal of time on health care and look forward to helping lead on this issue in the near future.

### 4. Tort reform

Small employers, from doctors to contractors, are **struggling to pay skyrocketing premiums** to protect themselves against lawsuits. This year I remain committed to implementing tort reform measures that will protect employers and families.

### 5. Ergonomics rules

Last year House Republicans proposed **repealing the state's costly and burdensome new ergonomics rules**. We were blocked, so voters took matters into their own hands by passing I-841 and repealing the rules themselves. My hat is off to the people of Washington for recognizing the severe, negative impact those rules would have had on employers and putting a stop to it.

### 6. Minimum wage

Washington now has the **highest minimum wage in the nation**. Last year we tried to freeze any rate increases until Washington's unemployment rate falls below national levels. It didn't pass, but the idea is still an important lifeline for our small businesses so we're continuing to pursue it.

## Changing education for the better



It is absolutely imperative that we **attract and retain quality teachers** in our public schools. It is also critical to **maintain local control** of our schools. Our students' success and achievement depends on doing these things. This year we are looking for ways to

fund education initiatives without tax increases. We have identified several potential revenue sources and will use them if we can get both parties to cooperate.

This year I am also introducing bills aimed at **keeping our school kids safe**. One would make schools "gang-free zones" and prohibit threatening gang activity on or around school grounds. Another would modify current weapons' definitions to keep knives and other objects illegal at school. I am working with local police to identify other problem areas we might address.



**Rep. Condotta is assistant Ranking Republican on the House Commerce and Labor Committee.**

## Maintaining land & water rights



When some Washingtonians hear the term "water rights" they think about water coming out of the faucet at home. Not so in Central and Eastern Washington, where the success of our agricultural community often depends on state water policies. Too often, agencies' overly restrictive and unsound policies create a huge burden for farmers and ranchers. This year I will again stand strong with other Eastern and Central Washington lawmakers to **protect our private water rights**. What happens in areas like the Methow Valley can and will have an effect on our future, and this issue must remain a top priority.

I also believe we should be concerned with how quickly government is buying up land. Today, 81 percent of Chelan County is publicly owned. It simply doesn't make sense for the government to keep buying land, taking it off the tax rolls and shrinking our local tax base. This session, I am examining options for **protecting privately owned property** and pursuing legislation designed to restrict unnecessary and costly purchases of private land by public agencies. It is especially important in these tight budget times to put our many other priorities, including education and criminal justice, before further land acquisitions.

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**2004  
Session  
Priorities**

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## 12th District

### More issues important to Central Washington

The State Department of Labor and Industries has imposed yet another rule that will handcuff agricultural employers. Beginning Feb. 1, L&I will require these employers to **test the blood of field**

**workers** who handle certain pesticides for cholinesterase, an enzyme critical to the function of the central nervous system. These tests have been going on in California for about 20 years, with little in the way of results. L&I is using decades-old data to justify this new rule, and estimates show only 0 – 1% of workers tested will face medical removal. False positive test results can run as high as 10 percent, adding unnecessary costs. This session I am sponsoring a bill that would require L & I to pay for all costs associated with testing and use the results to determine if further testing should ever be considered.

Many land-owners, as part of their ongoing agricultural activities, need to **burn on their land**. But the state has squeezed them with tighter controls and a shrinking list of what's legal to burn. This year I have sponsored a bill that would **give local government more control over burning** and allow burning under broader circumstances, including to prevent and control pests and disease.

Finally, I do not believe we can continue to hammer our agricultural community with issue after issue and expect them to survive. I will make every effort to correct what I can and **support our growers**.



**Inside:**

- Building a competitive business climate
- Schools
- Regaining your water and property rights

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